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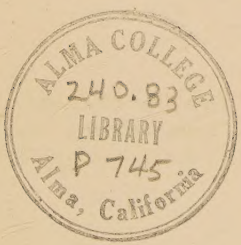
LIVING WITH GOD

Living with God

By the Rev. Raoul Plus, S.J

With Prefatory Letter by
His Eminence Cardinal Mercier



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PREFACE

As ministers of Christ, our mission is to make Him known and loved. And then "does not Eternal Life consist in knowing God, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent?"

Christianity is not merely a rejection of evil; nor is it merely a doctrine of positive morality; it is, essentially and primarily, a life—the new life of man, regenerated by baptism. This life has been called "the meeting of two loves"—the divine love which humbly stoops towards mortals, and that love called charity of the soul, which surrenders itself in its entirety to God.

That God comes to us, and dwells within us—*Ipse prior dilexit nos*—that we offer ourselves unreservedly to God, and abide in Him—this is the "Christian mystery" towards which should tend all our affections, all our aspirations, all that we are, and all that we have.

Your living thoughts, vested in a language at once penetrating and restrained, will, I

have no doubt, instil into your readers a realization of the Christian life as thus understood.

I pray God to bless your work, and by that blessing to reward its pious author.

D. J. CARDINAL MERCIER,
Archbishop of Mechlin.

ARCHBISHOPRIC OF MECHLIN,
Feast of Saint Francis de Sales, 1920.

INTRODUCTION

REMEMBERING the words of our Lord to the Samaritan woman, we first thought of making our title *The Water of Life*, but preferred *Living with God* as being more explicit, if not more clear.

That God has certain relations with us, and most intimate relations, is a dogma—a dogma denied by many: but these we shall ignore—a dogma whose rich depths are unfathomed even by those who admit it. And, as a natural consequence, a dogma unused, uncomprehended, unapplied—and yet the richest, the most real, the most inexhaustibly productive of all.

The awakening of fervent Christian souls to a realization of the remarkable aids procured for us by means of sanctifying grace—such was our wish in writing *God In Us*.

This work supplied, doubtless, the needs of many souls. In a few months the sale exceeded many thousands.

We were not wrong in thinking, as we said in a pre-war article, that one of the character-

istics of our time seemed to be a greater "appreciation of the state of grace"—nor were we wrong in finding it well worth while "to make God known, since God had revealed Himself"—and to do this in a world that some would wish to see "godless."

But why this new booklet? Was not *God In Us* sufficient? The difficulty for those who, having come in contact with this wonderful doctrine of sanctifying grace, wish to live by it, and to draw the maximum of life-power from it, does not lie in the obscurity of the mystery, but rather in the element of unexpectedness, of ultra-sublimity, of "inadaptability," which the mystery contains. Everything, moreover, belongs to the domain of the invisible. Sense is negligible. One must return to its consideration twice—nay, several times—to be able to persuade oneself: "This is no dream: it is true. This actually happens."

Gradually, and by frequent returning to this idea, its glories shine forth. The grotto is flooded with the light of diamonds, but not yet does one discover the myriad pillars formed by the stalactites. Only after long contemplation, when the eye grows accustomed to the dusk, is this further beauty revealed.

There is no better way of accustoming our souls to look "within" than by suggesting—without insistence—a short, swift phrase or thought, thrown out as if by chance, yet which pierces through our habitual indifference, and forces the awakened soul to ex-

claim: "Ah! Let me see. Where was I? . . . Here? . . . I never thought it! . . . What a sudden unfolding of great treasures!"

And even though the light fade soon away, and the darkness of night envelop us again, yet they are good—these intervals of light, cloud-rifts which cast shafts of sunlight across our life, and open up, in our cloud-barred skies, vistas of infinity. . . .

A humorist has spoken of "driving the thinking reed into a corner"—which is possible because, even if he is a Christian, the poor "reed" thinks so little!

"How many people eat, drink, and marry; buy, sell, and build; make contracts and acquire fortunes; have friends and enemies, pleasure and pain; are born, grow up, live and die—but asleep."[1]

"Asleep." This word, by force of contrast, recalls the words of Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity:[2] "Let me live *wide awake* in my faith."

Certainly the world is busy. God knows that of all capital sins laziness is just now the least in favour.

But it is a somnambulistic activity. If I could only approach each individual and address him thus: "My friend, please tell me what is the aim of all this activity? Do you

[1] Joubert.

[2] A Carmelite of Dijon. Her *Souvenirs* are profitable reading.

pay any attention to the Essential in your life? Do you ever consider?"

"Consider? Can't you see I have other things to do?"

And yet Jesus of Nazareth once said that "one thing alone is necessary."

Everyone knows that Christ is not modern! Although He was an artisan, He lacked a sense of the practical—"*First*, the Kingdom. The *rest* is superfluous. . . . And this Kingdom is *within* you."

What antiquated language! What ignorance of life!

And when Martha gets impatient and uneasy, He says, "Mary has chosen the better part!"

He who preached about the beatitudes forgets completely that our lands are "full of intense life," and that, after all, "business is business"!

The world has gone ahead. Dreamers are all very well! And making strange use of a word which does not convey their meaning, they say, "Mystics are all very well, too!"

The woman of Bethany at the feet of Christ: what a beautiful inspiration for an artist! But what a pitiful model for men of action such as we are proud to be!

We hate loss of time.

And because people refuse to "waste their time" in considering, they lose the world!

Did not Jeremias say: "The earth is

desolate . . ." ? Why ? "Because no one considereth in his heart."[1]

Jeremias was right, and knew humanity well. And the Son of God, too, explains Jerusalem's fall thus: "Because she knew not the time of her visitation."[2]

Who can question the discernment of the Master ?

Listen to these profane echoes of the inspired words:

"Oui, je comprends qu'on aille aux fêtes,
Qu'on soit foule, qu'on brille aux yeux,
Qu'on fasse, amis, ce que vous faites,
Et qu'on trouve cela joyeux ;
Mais vivre seul sous les étoiles,
Aller et venir sous les voiles
Du désert où nous oublions,
Respirer l'immense atmosphère,
C'est âpre et triste, et je préfère
Cette habitude des lions."

Without emphasizing particular words, what great strength there is in this diatribe recently unearthed from among the unpublished papers of a great poet.[3]

[1] xii. 11. [2] Luke xix. 44.

[3] Victor Hugo:

"Your love of fêtes I understand,
Your love of crowds and glances gay ;
'Tis just to be expected, and
What you would call 'a perfect day.'
But give me 'neath the stars to roam
Oblivious in the wilderness,
To breathe the boundless air, their home
To share with lion and lioness."

In our century men dwell not among lions; they prefer ant-hills. Let them do so! But what a degradation—to be satisfied with an ant-hill when we were created to build the great edifice of sanctity!

Let us be inspired by a nobler ideal. "*Myself and my Creator*," wrote Newman. "All else is nothing."

Recruits are badly needed for the sparse ranks of the *élite* who think like him, and fervently seek a frequent talk with God.

Father Gratry used to give this advice: "Pay attention to God in your heart. In silence and recollection listen to the voice of your soul and the voice of God. Perhaps, O my brother, you have spent fifteen years on earth without making one effort to do so? Perhaps you have never prayed earnestly and really to God for one quarter of an hour? 'There was silence for one half-hour in heaven,' says the Holy Scripture. Is this half-hour of heavenly silence unknown to you? Has it never once found a place in the whole course of your life?

"'I ask you to offer up a quarter of an hour's silence to-night for your soul and for God,' said a great Bishop, speaking to a meeting of men. And behold! in the middle of the night an old man awakened the Bishop, and said to him: 'I made the quarter of an hour's silence for the first time in my life. I cannot wait till to-morrow to tell you. My

life is changed. I belong to God and to His eternal religion!'"[1]

You who now hold this little book in your hands will, I hope, meditate—during the half or quarter of an hour which you will consecrate to meditation — on the supreme mystery, God's presence and life in your soul, by means of sanctifying grace, for this is, as you well know, "the fountain springing up into life everlasting."[2]

You are one of those souls invited, across the ages, by the prophet Isaias: *Omnes sitientes, venite ad aquas!*[3] And by the author of the Apocalypse: *Qui sitit, veniat et accipiat aquam.*[4] "All you that thirst, come to the waters." "He that thirsteth, let him come and take the water of life."

Open this book at random, as you would the *Imitation*. Perhaps you will read several paragraphs fruitlessly. Only the author is to blame. But perhaps some thought or other will give your soul a healthful shock. A piece of metal need not be either very heavy or very precious to awaken numerous echoes from a surface capable of vibrating.

Suddenly the phenomenon which we have described will take place. A rent will appear in the veil. A ray of light, small and fleeting. A sudden rift in the dull wall of visible things

[1] Gratry: *The Sophists and Criticism*. Conclusion, pp. 388, 389.
[2] John iv. 14. [3] Isa. lv. 1. [4] xxii. 17.

will give you, for one bright moment, a glimpse of the Invisible, present there within you, and waiting for you in the depths of yourself.

If God grants you such a moment, treat it worthily. One such moment may possess the secret of transforming a soul.

Close the book. . . . Henceforth it would impede you. It would be a screen between you and the divine Guest *within* you.

Close the book. . . . And also all the pathways leading outwards.

You alone . . . and God—*Myself and my Creator.*

You are at the centre of the world. If it is given to you to remain there, even a little longer than one fleeting moment, so much the better!

From such close contact with God you will come forth unrecognizable to yourself.

And if a desire is born in you to renew this visit, it is a sign that the Master wishes to use you for His glory. . . .

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CHAPTER I

CONDITIONS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Fili . . . attende in corde tuo.
("My son . . . attend in thy heart.")
ECCLUS. xvi. 24.

"At all stages of my life, as boy and man I have always lived as far as possible from myself. Far from trying to know myself, I have always tried to remain in ignorance of myself. I consider knowledge of oneself as a source of care, uneasiness, and torture. I lived with myself as little as I possibly could. . . . 'Be ignorant of thyself' is the first precept of wisdom. . . . I have always known how to find entertainment, that was my whole art of life."

From a SCEPTICAL NOVELIST.

The Christian rule is quite different:

"Why do you not fix steadily before your eyes the mirror of your souls?" asked the holy Abbess Radegonde of her children. "Let us enter 'within' ourselves. Many discoveries await us there, perhaps."

CHAPTER I

CONDITIONS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

We sometimes desire to explore the depths of another soul: how rarely those of our own!

Most men never exercise the incomparable privilege of withdrawing from the crowded world, of seclusion, and of meditation. They are like a metal ever enclosed in its lode.

Only a few—in the highest degree lords of the world and of themselves—have the power of winning this matchless gift, and thus to see, at a simple word of command from them, and, as it were, at their mere wish, men and things vanish, appearances fade away, all that is *nothing* gradually grow dark—then the *real* suddenly arise before the soul's eyes, distinctive, calm, luminous, hardly-won perhaps, but victorious and supreme. Have we this power?

If we sometimes try to annihilate what is really nothing God will discover Himself.

We may remark that the difficulty lies, not in reflecting, but in *thinking of reflecting*.

Begin by always welcoming the opportunities that are ordered or offered. Later on

there will be less need of a signal or an official invitation. By accepting reflection willingly we acquire the habit of reflecting spontaneously.

Isolation does not always create solitude. One can be very much alone amidst a tumult.

In the midst of crowds, the inward soul can quite easily be far away in spirit. It possesses the noblest and rarest independence.

To live *above* yourself, live *within* yourself.

Many people say prayers. Very few pray. Praying is not merely *speaking*, it is *hearkening*. "You hearken not to what you say," exclaims Saint John Chrysostom, "how do you expect God to hearken to you?"

Recollection!... A passive virtue?.. Try it!

In the first chapter of his first book the author of the *Imitation* writes: "*Stude cor tuum ab amore visibilium abstrahere et ad invisibilia te transferre.* You wish to belong to God: 'therefore study to withdraw the love of thy soul from all things visible, and turn it to things invisible.'"

Stude, abstrahere, se transferre,—apply all your zeal, drag yourself out, take yourself by both hands and transfer yourself within by sheer force—these are not altogether words of rest.

We require great activity to be able to listen to the great divine work going on in the depths of our souls.

If we talk in a loud voice and while riding, the clash of words and the jingling of the bells drown all other sound. And there below us, quite near, the torrent is eating into the very heart of the rock, and we do not hear it.

Before acting — always put an interval between impulse and act.

During action—always preserve "presence of mind" . . . and "presence of heart."

Never take too large a place in what you do. God has the right not to be altogether forgotten, in every one of our deeds.

After each act—go back *into* yourself—which doesn't mean go back *upon* yourself.

To live *within* does not mean to live *inside*. To be *recollected* is by no means synonymous with being *enclosed*.

In me there are two personalities: the principal personality, which acts like everyone else; then the associate personality, which now and again gives a few Christian touches to my everyday life.

Is that a living faith?

No doubt our human actions, even if they lack an actual intention dedicating them to

God, who imparts His divinity to us, are "divine" if we are in a state of grace.

But should we not be concerned by the fact that these actions look anything but "divine"?

It seems a small thing to be scarcely different from an honest pagan.

We cling to the dogma. Not only should we believe it, we should believe *in* it.

The spirit of faith is the habit of seeing everything in God, and God in everything.

It has very justly been observed that "Christians fail to think about what they believe. We do not ask them to expand such ideas, but to *enter into* them."

What a strange contradiction! Here on earth we never—or rarely—think of what will occupy our thoughts for all eternity.

The first thing our Lord asks of Saint Margaret Mary is "to make an inward solitude in *her own* heart, for it is there that *His* Heart will be revealed."

There is a golden rule given by Fénelon—"We must not wait for hours of leisure to close the soul's door. The moment which makes us regret our want of recollection may also make us practise it there and then."

There are words which we should question and examine, even if we have a long acquaintance with them. Very few friends let us into their secrets at an early stage in our friendship.

Someone used to say, "Would you like to see my statue?" And then he would show a skeleton-like figure, constructed of a collection of bars.—"That a statue?"—"Yes: you have only to mould the clay over these iron bars, and then to give an expression to the clay."

Most of our ideas are skeleton-like and fleshless. We must fill them out with *meditation*. They are dead things, but will come to life; they are dumb, but will have speech; they are bloodless, but will be filled with life and strength.

"How do you think of God?"

"As three enormous letters formed by white stones on a grassy slope visible at a great distance."

That is all God represents to many men: a word—three letters—a formula—a dead God.

And yet God calls Himself "The Living God"!

Happy are the souls who, in all circumstances, feel themselves urged to look behind the picture, to pierce through the canvas, and to say, like the English essay-writer, "Behind the veil!"

We must pierce right through words to the other side. They hide from the inattentive more truth than they reveal.

How different in a saint and in us is the understanding of the smallest sentence in the catechism. We should learn to "realize," or, as Saint Ignatius says, "*Gustare res interne*," to discover the deep inner essence of things.

What a great part in our lives is given to the consideration of "nothing." Of the 1,440 minutes which compose a day, a few might perhaps be devoted to the consideration of "the All."

There is an art in letting passing things pass, and in clinging to the only fixed point in the midst of the fleeting transience of things.

Tauler, the German mystic, said: "The Rhine flows through my soul." What a flood of worries constantly furrows our minds! We must take care lest we cast ourselves into the torrent.

Use your eyes especially for looking *within.*

Tell anybody to go deep down into himself. . . . He will think you want to send him sailing far away to some inhospitable and unknown land! *Into myself!* What a journey!

And yet the essential in ourselves is *within.*

The lands worth discovering are not far, far away; on the contrary, they are *quite near*. We easily find navigators for the North Pole and for Tierra del Fuego, where there is little life.

The land of our soul contains *Life*. And yet how many approach it, how many explore it, and, above all, how many pitch their tents there?

* * * *

"According as we advance, everything becomes more simple and more restful, we understand better that the whole reality of things is 'within,' and that, though our human activities are many and varied, yet we have only one work to do: to love God, to contemplate Him, to serve Him—in which consists the sanctification of ourselves and the love of our neighbour. Ah! What a great science is peace, and how *near* to us! Rather we should not say near us, but *in* us. Moreover, this peace of which I speak is not merely a state; it is a *being*, a living, working, loving being—a being which is the gift of God—God in person."—Mgr. Gay: *Letter to his sister*, "*Correspondence*," vol. ii., p. 24.

"Awake, my soul, sleeping time is over! Hearken to my message! Beyond the skies there dwells a King who desires to possess you. With His whole heart He longs for you. Beyond all measure He loves you. And so tender and so true is His love, that He

has left His kingdom and has humbled Himself because of you.

"Must He wait still longer for the answer of your heart? He asks for you—for you and for your love."—*The Exercises of St. Gertrude.*

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATION OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Medius vestrum stetit.

("There hath stood One in the midst of you.")

JOHN i. 26.

"There hath stood One in the midst of you.'

So spoke John the Baptist to the Jews, when announcing to them the presence of the Saviour amongst them, and he added: "Whom you know not."

It is to each of us that the words of the Precursor are addressed.

Let us realize that there is ONE within us. . . .

And let us examine who this Guest is—whence He comes—and what He desires.

CHAPTER II

THE FOUNDATION OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

We would like to be able to examine every baptized soul, and to put it, once for all, face to face with the significance of its baptism.

To many *baptism* means just an inscription on a register in a sacristy a long time ago.

We were very *unconscious* at baptism. Let us take care lest we be always so.

If we were then unaware of what we were receiving, let us not remain for ever so. Because it was given us *without us*, let us not live as if *without it*.

A newly-born child is being carried to church. And, looking heavenwards, behold God emigrating, so to speak, from His home of glory. Whither is He descending? Where go the Three Persons? Towards what new paradise, more beauteous or more vast? . . .

Whither are they going? Into the soul of that tiny babe about to be anointed with the holy oil.

Knowest Thou, indeed, O God, where Thou art going? . . . Thinkest Thou this child will remain always faithful? . . .

But a moment ago this babe was but a child of man. He leaves the church—the angels bow before him—he is a *son of God.*

A child is brought to its mother after birth. "Not just now! I will kiss him when he is baptized."

What a beautiful example of Christian understanding! Until the water is poured upon its head, this child is still but a tiny babe. After that this tiny babe will contain the Almighty.

In creating us God gives us *our own being.* In baptism He gives us a supernatural participation in *His own Being.*

On my birthday I was born of man: *natus.* On the day of my baptism I "was born of God": *ex Deo natus.*[1]

We celebrate the anniversary of our coming into the world. Why not—and with greater reason—that of our entry into the Church? There is between them all the difference between *human* and *divine* birth.

A missionary in North America asked an old inhabitant his age. "I am only two years old," he replied. "I only count the years of my life from the day when, through Holy Baptism, I was born for God; the eighty years before that were only a dead life."

[1] John i. 13—*ex Deo nati.*

Have we who have been long baptized the same lively esteem and respect for the sacrament?

From the age when reason awakens in the child, show him God, who has been dormant in his soul since baptism—or, rather, who is awaiting there the awakening of his faculties—and teach him to recognize this wonder, to utilize it, to live by it. Later on he will have something else to do! He will be like everyone else, and lose interest in the *essential*.

Utilize in children their regal gift of fresh hearts and minds, which lie spontaneously open to the reception of the divine.

God lives in me? . . . Impossible! It is *too beautiful* to be true! But it *is* so.

In the sublime prayer offered by our Lord to His Father at the end of the Last Supper with His Apostles, He asks "that they all may be *one*, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee . . . I *in them* and Thou in Me. . . . Let the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me be *in them* and I *in them*" (John xvii. 21, 23, 26).

And still more explicitly in the last discourse to the Twelve before that prayer: "If anyone love Me (lives in a state of grace) My Father will love him, and We (the Blessed Trinity) will *come to him*, and We will make our abode *with him*" (John xiv. 23).

Thanks to this coming, says St. Peter

(2 Pet. i. 4), we become *divinæ consortes naturæ*—"partakers of the divine nature."

Is there any need for clearer texts?

St. John calls us "children of God"—*filios Dei fieri.*[1] We were created servants. The servant is *in* the family, but not *of* it. Baptism naturalizes us as divine beings. Although children of wrath, we may address God as "*Our* Father." And this adoption is not the result of a legal convention, for it confers on us not only the same rights, but the same blood.

Tabernacles of God—*templum Dei.* All of God dwells within us. "I am He who is, thou art she who is not," said our Lord to a Saint. That is, grace is in our souls: "He that *is*" dwelling in the heart of "one who is *not.*"

Marvelling at such great glory, St. Jerome wrote to Eustochium: "We Christians should thrill with a great and holy pride"—*Disce sanctam superbiam.* Do we?

Our relations towards the divine Guest of our souls would be very much altered if we thoroughly grasped these words of a Christian philosopher: "Regard the *infinite* not as a thing, but as a *person.*"

What do the words "sanctifying grace" convey to most people? The idea of an

[1] John i. 12.

obscure, vague, unreal world. . . . Again we are the victims of abstractions. Grace is not merely *something*, it is *someone*.[1]

God, His infinity, His immensity . . .

Suppose that, by some happy chance, this God had loved me so much as to give me part of His own Life. Suppose He said: "I will love him as a son." Suppose the words of St. Paul were true: "He has predestined me to be His child"—*in adoptionem filiorum*.[2]

Even so far God *has* loved me. St. Paul is right: His love is indeed excessive—*propter nimiam caritatem*[3]—His "exceeding charity."

Deus cordis mei.[4] "Thou art the God of my heart." That is the most touching definition of the Most High. It brings Him *so near* who is so far away!

Mark well the little word "My" in the common exclamation: "*My* God! *My* God!" What depths of meaning lie within it! God is mine—God is *my own*; God indeed possesses me, for He is God; but I, too, possess Him, and He is *mine*.

God is present everywhere, a presence necessary and universal. He is present *within us* by grace—a presence of love and preference.

[1] For a more detailed exposition of the doctrine, see *God In Us*, Books I, II, and IV.
[2] Eph. i. 5. [3] Eph. ii. 4. [4] Ps. lxxii. 26.

"Thou art the *temple of God*," says Saint Augustine to the Christian. "What more couldst thou desire?"

I put a little shell to my ear, and I hear the deep rumble of the great majestic ocean. A mere illusion!

I listen to the beating of my own heart. It is the ocean of Life that throbs within. This is *reality*—the most real of all realities.

St. John, resting *on* the heart of Jesus! . . . We envy his familiarity! There is another: the Holy Spirit is *in* my own heart. . . . This familiarity is mine!

The Holy Spirit is the *highest* reality—*donum Dei altissimi*—the most intimately *ours*—*dulcis hospes animæ!* It is a reality which I may attain either by ascending to the ineffable splendours of the heart of God, or by descending into the great silent depths of my divinized being.

When we say: The Holy Ghost dwells in the souls of the just, we do not mean that the Third Person alone abides there. Where the Holy Ghost is, there also are the Father and the Son. This dwelling-place is *attributed* to the Spirit of Love because it is essentially a work of love.

Have I devotion to the Sacraments of my own Baptism and Confirmation; to the feast of the Holy Trinity, which is considered the

culminating point of the Christian life;[1] to the Holy Ghost; to the *Gloria Patri*, the most deeply significant of all invocations? . . .

If not, why am I so short-sighted?

If so, I am following in the wake of God's greatest friends.

God showed one day to Saint Alphonsus Rodriguez the Holy Trinity abiding in the soul of the generous apostle Peter Claver. Thereby He may have meant to thank the humble porter of the college of Majorca, whose first aspiration every morning was: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost."

Those who communicate receive the body of Christ—a wondrous fact. But His body lasts only the same short time as the sacred species.

He who lives in a state of grace possesses the divinity of the Father, of the Word, and

[1] Blessed Peter Lefèvre, the first priest received into the Society of Jesus, meditates as follows, on the Feast of the Holy Trinity, 1543: "Here you must make a resolution—to refer your yearly gains to the Feast of the Holy Trinity. This day must be for you the beginning of the harvest of your yearly fruits and the end of all your soul's gains. Also it must help in the building of your temple, in which you will prepare a holy habitation to be the eternal dwelling-place of the Holy Trinity, in whom end all the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and all the ceremonies, feasts, and Sundays established by the Church."—Gauthier-Villars, *Memorial of Blessed Peter Lefèvre*, p. 373 (first edition, Bouix, 1874).

of the Holy Ghost, not only for a quarter of an hour, but for *as long as he will*, and, if it is his wish, for ever.

Is it a lesser thing to receive lastingly the divinity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, than to receive, when it must inevitably pass, the Sacred Humanity of the Incarnate Word?

This detracts in no way from the happiness of communion—rather it adds, in a singular manner, to the happiness of living in a state of grace.

Someone may say: "Why exactly do we need communion if God is already present in us in sanctifying grace?"

Because God wishes to exhaust all ways of coming to us, and all our possible ways of receiving Him.

He is *God*, and as such He gives Himself to us in Baptism. The Eucharist completes the work by giving us the *Man-God*.

We are *spirits* and can unite ourselves to Him *spiritually* by means of sanctifying grace. We are *human*, and as such we can unite ourselves to Him corporally in Holy Communion.

Being a sacrament of the living, the Eucharist requires for its reception the presence of sanctifying grace; hence the presence of God, for God alone within us is worthy of receiving the Man-God.

Twice the Master deigned to explain this to Saint Angela of Foligno: "I belong to

you; if you receive Me, you receive Him whom you already possess. Communicate, *therefore*, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. I who am worthy, make you worthy" (*Book of Visions and Instructions*).[1]

What an ideal of union has Jesus fashioned for binding us to Him! Not content with *incorporating us in Himself* at the baptismal font, His desire is to *incorporate Himself in us* —not alone mystically, but physically—every time we receive the living bread.

Communion certainly presupposes a state of grace. The supernatural being a life, it was meet that nourishment should be given to that life—a nourishment in proportion to itself.

Think of this—man is so great by reason of his supernatural elevation that nothing less than *the Body of the Son of God* is required to nourish him.

Being destined to partake one day of the unveiled divinity, I serve my apprenticeship by receiving the Godhead under the veil of appearances. God arranges the stages of my apprenticeship. My union with the God-Man is eucharistic *communion*, my simple union with the invisible God is the *state of grace*,

[1] Hello's trans., chap. xxii, p. 92, and chap. xl, p. 164 (fifth edition, Tralin. 1914).

my union with God, no longer hidden, but openly revealed—that is *Heaven.*

Another advantage of Holy Communion is pointed out by our Lord Himself: "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood, abideth in Me, and I in him."[1]

He comes *transitorily* as Man-God the more easily to remain *perpetually* as God. The Blessed Eucharist is a sacrament which pre-eminently sanctifies, sustains, develops, and gladdens the supernatural life, the life of the "Three Persons" in our souls. *Communion* is the best way to attain to *union.*

To render us capable of cultivating this intimacy with God, God must be present—not present from great heights and great distances, but He must be quite near us and on our own level.

What else is the state of grace?

God appears to Moses in a burning bush. Here let us not speak of intimacy. God's greatness is too dazzling: Moses is humbled to the dust.

God comes face to face within us, and here there is no obstacle to *intimacy.* No longer is He too exalted. His Majesty is completely veiled—and men feel no rapture of recognition. . . .

An *intimate* friend is one whom we may approach without fear, meet without strain,

[1] John vi. 57.

speak to unreservedly, and as often as we wish.

Therefore we may be *intimate* with God. . . Why do we delay in becoming so?

But God *in me* is invisible. Doubtless. What conclusion is to be drawn from that? Does invisible mean non-existent?

Things unseen have a light of their own.

We have spoken of Moses; let us be like him: *invisibilem tanquam videns*[1]—seers of the Invisible.

Take away from life that which *alone* really matters—*unseen realities*—and the remainder amounts to very little.

* * * *

"The time seems to have come when the great dogma of the incorporation of the faithful with Jesus Christ, which holds such an outstanding position in apostolic doctrine, will take up an equally important place in the instruction of doctors and of the faithful, in theology and in the catechism; a time when this point, on which St. Paul bases all his moral and dogmatic teaching, from which he deduces everything, and to which he refers everything, will not be regarded as a merely accessory point; when people will understand that this union which the divine Saviour holds out to us, under the image of a vine and its branches, is no empty metaphor, but a reality,

[1] Heb. xi. 27.

that in baptism we *really* become sharers in the life of Jesus Christ, that we receive, not figuratively but *really*, the divine Spirit who is the origin of this life, and that, without casting off our human personality, we become members of a divine body, thereby acquiring divine strength and a divine destiny."[1]—(Father Ramière, *The Hopes of the Church*, III. ad p., ch. iv, par. 2.)

[1] For the many souls attracted by the many aspects of the dogma of the *Divine Indwelling*, we intend to treat some day of this doctrine of our *Incorporation* with Jesus, the foundation of our divinization by grace.

CHAPTER III

THE RUPTURE OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

In propria venit et sui eum non receperunt.

("He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.")

JOHN i. 11.

"God came unto His own, and His own received Him not!"

Words full of cruel sadness—and true even to-day! God chooses a "home" within us. Not merely a "pied-à-terre," but a permanent abode if we will.

We turn Him out of doors by sin! . . . We do not want His "home" within us! . . .

Even after the purification of our souls, bitter memories remain of the strange guests to whom we once gave, perhaps, an inward shelter, a painful abode.

Let us atone by much love.

And if we have happily remained in a state of grace, let us offer for others the fervent prayers of an atoning intimacy.

CHAPTER III

THE RUPTURE OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

REMEMBERING our destiny, to live without sanctifying grace is not life at all. St. Paul says: *Si . . . caritatem non habuero, nihil sum*[1] ("Without grace, I am nothing").

It can be very truly said of sin, which of itself brings upon us eternal death, that it thrusts us down to a state even lower than nothingness. Speaking of Judas, our Lord said: "It were better for him if he had not been born."[2]

Man—mere man—is an abstract definition, not a reality. *Saint* or *sinner*, he must be one or the other.

Man was not created according to a philosophic formula, but according to the plan of God. Now, according to God's plan, we are *supernatural* beings, and therefore greater than nature. What a sad work it is, to take from such greatness at our pleasure.

Christian perfection consists in being nothing *less* than "gods"; "worldly" perfection in being nothing *more* than men.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 2. [2] Matt. xxvi. 24.

Men! If only we took a word at its true value!

What is a *damned soul?* A being for ever alienated, in whom God no longer is.

To be *damned* is to be secularized for all eternity.

A life "*without God*" is an anticipation of damnation. Damnation means eternal secularization.

What a spectacle is offered to the eyes of the angels in the eternal shipwreck of a child of God! And to God, who understands all its awful reality, how unspeakable is the horror of such a sight!

During the war of 1914, the Sarto family, being forced to evacuate their house in Venice, wrote on its walls, "Respect the home of Pope Pius X."

What meagre respect many men have for their souls, the home of God!

At baptism we were warned to live *without stain:* "Receive this white robe, and see that thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of Christ."

The hospitality of many towards God lies in burying Him in their heart as though it were a tomb.

Many souls are like the Garden on Holy Thursday evening. The Master is there.

They forget to watch and to keep Him company. And something rises up within us in the gloom, perhaps, to perpetrate a treason.

God alone would not be afraid to go into the house whose shelter I offer Him. When I think seriously of myself I am ashamed to go in.

When a living person passes by, I often wonder . . . Is he *living* . . . or *dead?* . . .

"How many people live without suspecting that they have long been dead!"

Very few people would live with a corpse in their dining-room or in their bedroom.

And yet many live and have within themselves a dead soul!

Ezechiel was taken in vision "near the inner gate that looked toward the North." "Thinkest thou," said the Lord, "that there is nothing here but what thou seest? Dig in the wall and thou shalt see." Ezechiel dug in the wall and saw all sorts of reptiles and unclean animals, which had become the idols of Israel.

"Turn again," said the Lord. Ezechiel saw large crowds of women lamenting the death of Adonis.

"Again," and the prophet saw twenty-five men turning their backs on the temple of the true God, and adoring the sun.[1]

[1] vii. 4-19.

Memory is a sad privilege. *Peccatum meum . . . contra me . . . semper* ("My sin is . . always . . before me").

In the whole story of humanity there is nothing more terribly tragic than this refrain. Oblivion—what a power that would be to possess. But having to remember always, what a martyrdom!

My sin, always, between myself and God! Whenever I try to commune with God, between us glides the sin—my sin—*mine, meum*. Whenever I am silent it springs up before me! David said *my*. What do I say? . . . "my" or "our"?

It is not torture to desire what is *before* us, but to have to regret what is *behind* us. This is the torment of Tantalus reversed.

It is the convict's chain . . . the eagle clutching the antelope on which it has swooped down; a memory gnawing with greedy, bloody beak—for ever insatiable, for ever probing the innermost recesses of our souls.

And at times, when we think we have conquered ease and peace again, comes the sharp, bitter pain. . . . It is the eagle of memory. *Peccatum . . . ; semper.*

Who will give me the happiness of forgetting?

If only we thought, in the act of sinning, that never again in all our life will there be any escape from the tyranny of its memory!

It is always there; in that dark corner lies the sleeping, breathing monster, behind the iron bars which I have safely locked. And there has it been for ten, twenty, forty years. It cannot die. And on its claws perhaps, are hateful marks. Maybe it has slain some innocents? . . .

Long ago, in the Middle Ages, when all was still in an old castle, an ancestral knight used to wander towards a gallery whose walls were hung with painted canvases commemorating the history of his glorious exploits.

When all is still and quiet, and when we enter our hall of memories—big frescoes or humbler pictures—what a dismal array of failures meet our gaze!

What do people think of me? . . . I know not. And it matters little! But what *am* I? . . . That's the question. Yet we find it hard to despise ourselves!

It is salutary to think of the formidable capacity for *evil* which, to our shame, lies hidden, even in lives which are now quite true—and more salutary still it is to think of the magnificent capacity for *good*, buried beyond sight in a life which was, or perhaps is, a most guilty one.

The sad remembrance of our faults, which is supremely good for bad souls, may be sometimes bad for good souls.

How unhappy we should be were there no *absolution!*

We commit a mortal sin . . . God departs. We receive absolution . . . God returns. What a wondrous power lies in the hand of a priest, tracing the sign of the Cross, after a sorrowful confession of our sins!

If we could alter the direction of Niagara its waters would cleanse the whole of America —*ego te absolvo*—at these words the Niagara of divine pardon floods upon us, sweeping away all our vileness completely and for ever.

Confession is greater than creation. Creation produces something from nothing; confession annihilates a positive something.[1] To replace *sin* by *nothing* requires more power than to replace *nothing* by *something*. God has wrought this prodigy. For creation a single powerful thought was sufficient; for pardon a powerful act of forgetfulness is necessary. He has gone even as far as that. A wonder is the sacrament of penance.

Even so, there is some slight constraint in our relations with God. He is too great, and I am far too mean. Every time I wish to speak to Him the consciousness of my poverty crushes me to the ground. . . . He is rich enough for *both of us.*

[1] In this sense, that the injury done to God (guilt) is cancelled.

. . . Moreover, why speak to Him about *yourself?* Suppose, instead, you speak about *Him?*

But how can I dare do that, with all my wretchedness?

Is it the feeling of distance that paralyzes you? Dwell upon God's endeavours to conquer distance.

From heaven He comes to us. And amongst us He chooses *your* soul, to become one with you: *Tu in me, et ego in te, et sic nos in unum.*[1]

Why insist on the impossibility of being intimate friends, since God has abolished this impossibility by establishing a perfect oneness of life, of name, of possessions, and of inheritance?[2]

Sin is *never* an obstacle to our love of God, nor to God's love of us, when *repentance* and *trust* interpose between our sin and us.

Think of Mary Magdalen. At Bethany the Master calls her. On the Cross, He desires to see her at His feet. After the Resurrection

[1] *Imitation*, Book IV, chap. xiii.

[2] The following is an extract from Letter 44 of Father de la Colombière, written to a nun who was tempted to distrust: "I seem to read your conscience, and I see there your ingratitude to your sovereign benefactor. But all that . . . convinces me all the more of God's mercies towards you, because He is worthy of that infinite goodness by which He bestows Himself in profusion on souls where there is nothing to attract Him except this same profusion and His own love of doing good."

He wants her to be amongst the first at His tomb.

Can you despair after that?

But I cannot forget that there is a beatitude reserved for the pure. I have sinned. Therefore the joys of friendship are for ever banned: "*Mundo corde . . . videbunt.*"[1] The pure are an exclusive caste. The poor thirsting ones who have fallen faint and weak, but to whom God in His mercy has preserved their thirst —how will they fare? Are they excluded definitely and irrevocably?

No! . . . The Master has come down from the Mountain. At sight of all our moral wretchedness He speaks otherwise. He seems to chide, yet without cancelling His first assertion.

There is one thing which can rival purity, that is love: *Quia dilexit multum.*[2]

Mary Magdalen loved. On Easter Sunday morn Christ shows Himself to her—*videbunt*—and to her first, even before St. John.

Blessed are those who love. In spite of their faults, they may also "see" God.

But once given to God, Magdalen falls no more. But can the Master forgive when, after offering ourselves to Him, we break our promises? . . .

Look at St. Peter. He has just made his first Communion; He has just received the

[1] Matt. v. 8. [2] Luke vii. 47.

priesthood . . yet he denies Christ three times.

Where do you see our Lord ceasing to forgive? He made St. Peter the head of His Church.

Official sanctity requires researches, trials, and mandates. But *essential* sanctity is the state of grace.

Is *holiness*, then, a trifling thing? No! on the contrary, it has been said that "the *heroic* state is the state of grace."

And the practical synonym for "the state of grace" is "the state of sacrifice."

"I thought," Newman makes Callista say, "that a Christian without fervour could not exist."

Alas! . . .

There is only one thing in the world o which we should be afraid, and that is to receive so many invitations to ascend, and yet to remain constantly on the dead level of mediocrity, or perhaps still lower down.

"Behold what you are," God will say to us. "Behold what I desired you to be—and compare!"

Our only care should be *faithfulness* to the graces which come to us.

This faithfulness is our only standard of virtue if we are fervent, our only security for the future if we are sinners.

The structure of complete sanctity is erected on a first *inspiration*, unreservedly welcomed.

One rejected grace intimidates others which would follow in their turn. As if they feared a similar fate, they come more reluctantly to our soul. Even when they reach our door, God must encourage them to knock.

The following two propositions are equally true.

All loss of any grace whatsoever is irreparable.

It is always time to make reparation for everything.

Our Lord says to a holy soul: "I am like a fruitless treasure in many hearts; I am there because they are in a state of grace, but they draw no further worth from Me; make up for their deficiency."

There are many hearts in which God is not. Atone for that also.

The world is withdrawing from God. Let us entice God to enter into us, and let us withdraw near to Him. Love may *compensate* for contempt, and friendship for forgetfulness.

* * * *

"'Where wert Thou, Lord, when my soul was so afflicted by temptation?'

"'I was within you, for I am faithful; and I depart never, unless driven away by sin.'

"'If Thou wert within me, how came it that I did not feel Thee there? How, being so near the fire, did I not feel the heat, but only the cold and sadness and bitterness? It seemed as if my soul were filled with mortal sins.'

"'You ask how it is that I was within you. Tell Me what causes mortal sin? The will alone. There can be nothing either sinful or virtuous in what is not done wilfully. Your will was not there, or else you would have taken pleasure in the bad thoughts of the devil. Rather you suffered agonies through fear of offending Me. So you see that even in the height of these struggles I dwell secretly within you. This resolution to remain faithful was a sign that I was there still. This is how I am united to you, although you feel nothing. Think of My Cross; I was happy through the union of My divine with My human nature; and yet My flesh suffered because the Father had withdrawn His power from Me. He let Me suffer; but He had not broken the bond which always unites Him to Me. I often withdraw consolation but never grace. Grace can never be lost but by mortal sin.'"[1]

[1] St. Catherine of Siena: *Letters*, vol. iii, letter cxcix, pp. 200-201 (trans. Cartier; Poussielgue, 1886, second edition).

CHAPTER IV

ESTEEM FOR INTIMACY WITH GOD

Redempti . . . pretioso sanguine.
("Redeemed by His precious blood.")
1 PET. i. 19

"*Agnosce, O Christiane, dignitatem tuam,*" said Pope St. Leo. ("*Christian, recognize thy dignity.*")

We are of great worth, and we do not know it.

The most utterly sad thing about the spiritual life is that man will not realize the price he costs. If we could only wonder, wonder at ourselves, we should all be saints.

He must be great for whom God has given Himself

Realize it.

Understand thoroughly how far it binds you.

Act accordingly.

CHAPTER IV

ESTEEM FOR INTIMACY WITH GOD

When He created us, God wished and intended us to be *saints*.

The Infinite is within us—and yet there are some who consider it *zero*. Be not like them. Treat the infinite with the dignity it deserves; it will be worth while.

Imagine consenting to belong to "time" when we are imperatively destined for "eternity"!

Our hands, or rather our souls, are full of treasures. And who would suspect it? Oh, what worthless Christians we are! To be worth so much and value ourselves so little!

What an unspeakable prodigy is the soul of a Vincent de Paul or of a Curé d'Ars, of an Ignatius of Loyola, or of a Francis of Assisi! Yet *I* have been purchased with the same coin and at the same price—*Magno pretio empti estis*.[1]

One thing alone matters—*the soul*, with all the supernatural treasures it contains. One

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 20.

thing alone matters nothing to most people—the soul.

Queen Elizabeth of England sacrificed her whole eternity for thirty years on a throne.

Do we not often sacrifice ours for much less?

Esau sold his birthright for a mess of pottage. We sell ours, as sons of God, for a mere thought, a desire, a string of beads, or a piece of bread!

"They violated me for a handful of barley," said the Lord.[1]

And what pleasure do we get thereby? Listen to the confession of a sincere soul: "We never want to see consequences till afterwards, when it is too late. We hasten, so to speak, to do an act of folly, so as to regret it all the better afterwards; expecting a little joy, that we well know we should not have, and which will go soon, leaving sadness and disgust. . . . Would I were dead!"

The momentary pleasure of temptation. The pleasure of a sin committed. . . . For such a *trifle*, we give up *all!*

"*Qui non accepit in vano animam suam.*"[2] What strange words! To receive one's soul *in vain*. *In vain*—that means to no purpose. To receive *in vain*, as a worthless thing, the treasure with which God wished to fill

[1] Ezech. xiii. 19. [2] Ps. xxiii.

my soul—His own Life! What a fearful capacity we possess for rendering *vain* the desire of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and innumerable blessings!

Is it difficult to do that? You can do it by yielding to a bad thought in a grave matter.

I will pray fervently henceforth in the words of the *Pater Noster:* "Lead us not into temptation."

We must be on our guard. Heaven is with us, it is within us; but we are on earth. We wish to secure the world of *salvation*, but we live in the world of *sin*.

Realize the awful horror of the word *lost*. What an ending—not to have yourself

Yet *to be lost* may only mean the abandonment of our being, by our being—that is, annihilation, a return to nothingness. But no! We are irrevocably endowed with existence; and hence we are inexorably condemned to exist. *To be lost* does not mean to escape from oneself, to separate from oneself, but to be chained to oneself like a galley-slave, and to confront oneself in unquenchable torment eternally.

Have I meditated, as deeply as I ought, on the powers of evil that lie in my *freedom of*

will? Destined for a life of infinite love in eternal light, I may prefer eternal night and infinite hate.

Deeply sinful pleasure. . . . How must it be punished? With eternal penalties. How must it be pardoned? With the death of our God.

We can understand Pascal, whose mind was haunted with a great longing for the infinite, choosing to meditate on this: "A thorough realization of the words *good* and *evil*."

Surrender all your divine treasures—well and good. But consider the price: "Christ gave *all His blood*. Do more. I will not take less!"

What is bidden for my soul—
By the devil?—all the *world*.
By Christ?—all His *blood*.
By Mary?—a life all of *martyrdom*.
By myself?—*nothing* of anything.

The auction:

Jesus in the desert: "Kneel down," says the devil. "Behold all the treasures of the world for Thy soul. Wilt Thou have them?" —Christ remains standing.

Jesus in Gethsemane: "Give Me Thy blood," says His Father, "and all souls are Thine."—Christ kneels down.

David, parched with thirst during battle, wished for a draught of water from the well in Bethlehem. Hearing that three men have risked their lives to obtain it, he exclaims: "Never shall I drink a draught bought at so great a price. I should feel as if I drank the blood of these men."

And we make such little count of the "fountain which springs forth into eternal life." To bring it within our reach, Someone has risked much.

God has bought us at a great price! To create the world, He had but to open His lips; to redeem it, He had to open His hands, His feet, His side. Creation needed but a word; redemption, His last breath—creation, a word of His voice; redemption, the last drop of His blood.

Our ransom was already paid when we entered the world; therefore we overlook the price of our redemption.

Try to imagine a world without Christ, we shall love Jesus better.

We may easily believe that God has loved His "sons" better than His "Son"—His sons, our human kind, better than His Son, who is God, as He is; His adopted sons better than His only Son; His unloving sons better than His Son, who is Love itself. Did

He not sacrifice His Son that the others might be saved?

Wonder is usually the effect of seeing a thing for the first time. The Cross arouses wonder only when we have looked upon it hundreds of times.

Someone has spoken of "the incomprehensible passion." And, indeed, is there any more overwhelming mystery!—*proprio Filio suo non pepercit (Deus) sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit illum.* For us God has mercilessly sacrificed His own Son.[1]

Yet, of what was God thinking? We can understand loving someone who is worthy of our love. But to love *nothingness?*

We can love anyone who requites our love. But what madness to love someone who hurts, rejects, betrays us—who treats us with the most utter ingratitude, forgetfulness, baseness, or hatred. . . .

Even so does God love. *Nemo tam Pater.* No, indeed! No one else is such a Father.

And yet, could not God have known us better before loving us so? Even the blindest lovers love not thus.

He loved. *Dilexit.* He knew us, and yet He loved us even to such a degree. *Dilexit sic.* I cannot grasp such a fact . . . I do not need to grasp it. Or rather, one thing only

[1] Rom. viii. 32.

it is necessary to understand: and that is, that I also must love Him in return; and, as He loves, with *all* my heart: *sic dilexit . . . ut daret.*[1]

"Oh, unutterable love! to fashion us, you have made an anvil of your body," says Saint Catherine of Siena.[2]

Listen to the hammer. . . . See the flowing blood. . . . "In the midst of my work," said the saint, "I wish to see always that flowing blood."[3]

Let us, too, throughout our lives, see always on our horizon that great *red stain*. . . .

Self-knowledge, without God, can lead only to *despair*. But the knowledge of God in the soul leads inevitably to absolute *trust*. God has not paid so much to lose us so easily.

Contemplate the passing minute. It does not belong solely to me. Another has His rights over it. Our Saviour has paid in suffering for that minute.

Minutes bought *so dearly* must not be squandered.

I speak, laugh, work. . . . Each one of my acts, traversing time and space, links itself

[1] John iii. 16.

[2] VIII of her *Letters*, letter clxxiv, p. 89 (trans. Cartier; Poussielgue, 1866, second edition).

[3] *Ibid.*, VII, letter cxxxix, p. 421.

up with an act of the Son of God, immolating His life for me nineteen centuries ago.

The tiniest inspiration from on high, the smallest encouragement to stand firm against temptation, is tinged with blood from the Cross.

Our Saviour's words to Blessed Angela of Foligno—and to each one of us: "It is not *in jest* I have loved you."

But the only answer of the saint was: "'Tis not so with me. My love was but a jest, a deception, a lie, a pretence."

And she was a saint! What, then, have we to say? . . . Shall we resolve to love, to love *in earnest*, *now*—at last?

* * * *

"I went on with my accusations against each of my members, and with their miserable story.

"Jesus listened with great patience.

"'Daughter, the crimes you committed by adorning your cheeks with unnatural colours, and your hair with unnatural coils, and all the vainglory you have displayed before men, in opposition to God—I have atoned for. For all the paints and ointments, which have defiled your head, My beard was pulled, My hair was torn, My head was pierced with thorns and beaten with rods, stained with My own blood, derided, scorned, even to the mockery of a crown of thorns.

"'You painted your cheeks for display before wicked men, to gain their favour. But be not troubled! My face was covered with the spittle of such as they, and mutilated and swollen by their blows.

"'You used your eyes in the service of vanity, and sinful things, and godless joys. Mine were veiled—nay, drowned, first in My tears, then in My blood. They were blinded by the blood that flowed from My head.

"'For the sins committed by your ears, by listening to gossip and scandal, I have suffered false accusations, insults, curses, derision, mockery, sentence of death delivered by unrighteous judges—and, worst of all, My Mother's sobs.

"'You have indulged in the pleasures of gluttony and excessive drinking. When My throat was parched with thirst, hunger, and fasting, they gave Me gall and vinegar.

"'Your lips have uttered slanders, calumnies, mockery, blasphemies, lies—nay, even perjury. I was silent before My judges and false witnesses; no excuses passed My closed lips.

"'You give forth no pure fragrance. For the pleasures you bought with sweet-smelling perfumes, *I* have suffered the foul smell of spittle.

"'Your neck has been shaken by the excitement of anger, lust, and pride. Mine was struck and bruised with scourges.

"'For the sins of your shoulders, Mine have borne the weight of the Cross.

"'For the sins of your heart, Mine was pierced by a lance. For the sins of your feet —their empty dances, their lustful tread, their frivolous journeyings—Mine, instead of being tied, were *nailed* to the Cross. Yours have been shod in beautiful open-work shoes. Mine were covered with blood.

"'For all the sins of your body, Mine was mutilated and nailed to the Cross.

"'To atone for your vanities, I was exposed naked to the public gaze.'

"So spoke Christ, adding:

"'There is no sin, no disease of the soul, for which I have not paid the penalty and provided the remedy.'"—(Blessed Angela of Foligno: *Book of Visions and Instructions*, trans. Hello, chap. xxxv.)

CHAPTER V

THE PRACTICE OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Mihi adhœrere Deo . . .
("Remain united to God.")
Ps. lxxii. 27.

"*Who can tell us,*" exclaims Bossuet, "*in what secret part of our souls the Father and the Son have built their temple and their sanctuary? Who can explain how intimately they dwell there, or how they expand it so as to penetrate all its innermost depths, permeate it through and through, and energize all its actions?*

"*O man, will you never realize what God has done for you?*

"*Simply have faith, but a lively faith; your prayer needs no temple other than yourself. How near is God's listening ear! He is within you; He abides there; He reigns there, together with His Son. . . . Him He sends forth from His own heart into yours. And often, too, He sends His Spirit, the invisible sanctifier of this temple.*"

Meditations on the Gospel,
Med. XCIII, second series.

CHAPTER V

THE PRACTICE OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

THERE are few living Christians, because Christians draw their life-force from God, who lives *within them.*

God is not a character of past history, but a living Being *present* among us—a contemporary. Moreover, He not only lives quite near, He is far closer than a neighbour; He is *our guest.*

And yet are we not too often a stranger to our own Guest?

"To walk with God *within*," says the *Imitation*, "is the state of an *internal* man" (Book II, chap. vi). He may attend to other affairs. But these will be incidental. His primary, principal, and essential task should be *ambulare cum Deo intus.*

God dwells within me. And more, in a very real sense, He is a more intimate friend to me than I am to myself—"*Deus intimo meo intimior*," says Saint Augustine. This is neither a metaphor nor an exaggeration. Let this fact be no longer *hidden* from me.

All our being is laden with the *infinite*. And with how light a heart we bear it!

Wherever man is *least* present, there God—as well as in heaven and our tabernacles—is *most* present.

A very strange truth. To be the *least* present just where he should be *first of all*.

If a miracle is rare, it captivates us. If of daily occurrence, its charm is lost.

Mary comes *once* to Lourdes. Men flock there.

God comes into us . . . *continually*. But how many make a pilgrimage within themselves.

What must God think of being there always *all by Himself?*

It is said of someone, that "His spirit was like a cathedral in which the Blessed Sacrament was always exposed"!

In the state of grace, we, too, are living churches, having within us *a real* spiritual and *perpetual* presence.

In God's eyes, the souls of the just tower in grand relief above the host of others, just as we see the church steeples rise above the roofs of a town.

Let us always feel, wherever we go, that we are ever near a *sanctuary*.

Is the tabernacle of my soul—*templum Dei*—really a tabernacle or a caravanserai?

The priest at Mass keeps the chalice covered—my soul is such a chalice . . . God is within. No extraneous matter must enter there. The chalice must be kept *covered.*

"Processions" are forbidden. Yet there are rows of them continually in the streets, for every sinless Christian carries God within him wherever he goes.

Will they insist on our not being in a state of grace before they permit us to go out in the street?

What happiness to help God to illumine places from which men would shut Him out!

And yet what a responsibility! The Master must be visible within us. We are tabernacles or chalices. We must be still more—we must be *monstrances.*

Not to forget God does not mean to think of Him always, but to keep Him present with us in the smallest details of our lives.

Our Christianity gets cut up into too many compartments. We must not be "religious" only when bells are rung at Mass on Sundays; and on week-days for three minutes between rising and dressing, undressing and going to

bed. Outside these official exercises of piety God is just as lovable, just as easy of approach, and just as near.

To know that is to understand the difference between praying and possessing the *spirit of prayer*, between having a kind of piety and possessing an *inward life*.

We cannot always be in the *act of praying*. But we should always be in *a state of prayer*. Has not our Lord said: *Oportet semper orare*[1] ("You must always lead a life of prayer")?

The supernatural made natural—that is the inner life.

In a soul united to God all actions are prayers.

Does your mind find it necessary to be absent awhile? Then ask your heart to fill the gap. Such is the way of love. "I sleep, but my heart watches," says the Canticle—*Ego dormio, et cor meum vigilat.*[2]

Intimacy with God can be purchased. The first instalment is *silence*, the second complete *detachment*.

God dwells within me. Henceforth is there any space to spare for "me" within myself?

God and myself, within myself, is one too many.

[1] Luke xviii. 1. [2] Cant. v. 2.

John the Baptist said: "He must increase, but I must decrease."[1] But decrease is not enough. Later, St. Paul speaks of "disappearing"—"And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."[2]

But to lose oneself thus means annihilation! No, on the contrary it means becoming somebody. He who is willing to sacrifice his own life, findeth *the* Life.

Before the words *Vita vestra abscondita est cum Christo in Deo*[3] ("Your life is hid with Christ in God"), St. Paul put the two words *Mortui estis:* "You are dead." Die to yourselves first. Then your life will become His who is hidden *within* you.

Master, where dwellest Thou? Come and see.[4] The Master first said "*come*"—which implies walking. Afterwards we shall see—but only afterwards.

Renounce *everything;* you are leaving only a trifle to find *Him.*

Can anything *else* be left when we possess All?

A holy soul, having made the entire sacrifice of itself, said: "I must remain dead—what a poor thing is this dying self!"

[1] John iii. 30.
[2] Gal. ii. 20.
[3] Col. iii. 3.
[4] John i. 38.

Do we possess such faith and wondrous courage as this?

The contemplation of this mystery of divine love led Saint Teresa to wonder at the presence in the Christian vocabulary of such words as "venial" and "trifling matter." How can an insult to such a loving Master be *venial*, or a wound, even a pin-prick, wilfully inflicted, be *trifling?* One might as well "cast just a *little* mud at the tabernacle"! Such an offence was, to her, unspeakable.[1]

The realization of God within us is the foundation of our spiritual *self-respect*—and also of our *humility*.

The knowledge that God is so near makes us feel more keenly the distance from which God comes to us.

To see one's darkness proves the presence of a great light.

Look at yourself. For pride, you are too mean a creature—and yet too great, for God dwells within you.

That is no paradox.

The moments when I keenly feel the presence of God *within me* are the moments when I am most really *myself*.

[1] Queen Marie Leczinska reproached herself before one of her attendants for wilfully yielding to a slight fault. "But, madam, it is only a venial sin!"—"Yes, but my heart feels it is mortal!"

I am in the state of grace. . . . When I enter into my own soul something eternal enters *with me*.

The angels know this. Am I, perhaps, unaware of it, or careless about it?

When God enters into us He comes with the wish to occupy us wholly and entirely. . . . But we possess a strange and unfortunate power to measure out space to Him, and to compel the Infinite One to be satisfied with a tiny corner.

If we could see aright, every minute would mean to us "a visit from the Lord"—*Phase, id est transitus Domini*[1]—a passover, the passing of God into our souls—a passing which is also an abiding there, an abiding made of perpetual comings.

How can we induce such a coming within us? Strange to say, the attainment of trifles often necessitates strenuous effort. But for the great favour of a visit from God, nothing more is necessary than a single wish, a single inclination of the will, a single sigh.

God's comings are not striking in appearance. He comes noiselessly. He is afraid, as it were, to startle us.

When He comes to us in the Crib, He lays aside all visible splendour. He comes, not as a king, but as a beggar.

[1] Exod. xii. 11.

And in the Eucharist?

He does likewise. So is He within us by His grace. He divests Himself utterly of all; He dons humility; He resembles less a king who requires to be announced, than a poor man who glides in unassumingly, and humbly begs for a little consideration.

He does not even display His credentials at an official door. He enters unannounced, as if by the back staircase. If He is not noticed He stands there silent. What a divine bearing for a God! It would almost seem as if we were His superiors.

God knocks. Some — very few — cry: "Come in!" Others say: "Wait a moment!" And others say they are engaged with other visitors. A great many do not even condescend to listen.

Take heed! It is the Master!

There should be within us no doors closed to God.

In the ante-chamber of our souls let us hang two notices. To creatures: "No admittance"; to God: "Admittance free"—not only free, but longed for, expected, entreated.

Always be *ready* when God comes.

Saint Alexis comes to take shelter in his parents' house. He is given quarters under the stairs. Only when he dies is he recog-

nized. "Ah! had we only known that it was you!"

So let us be afraid to impose upon God's considerate discretion.

You omit to respond to God's divine grace —and yet it leads to the highest sanctity.

Let us yield to the calls from above. And let us be, as our Lord asked a soul, *loyally* faithful.

* * * *

"When the soul *wishes* to accompany God into this paradise within itself there are many ways of doing so. . . .

"I say *wishes*, because you must know that it is no extraordinary thing, but one which depends on *our will*, and consequently we can accomplish it with the *ordinary* help of God. For we are not speaking here of infused contemplation, but of recollection pure and simple.[1]

[1] We must, indeed, differentiate between two kinds of recollection—one which depends on human effort helped by ordinary grace; the other which human effort is powerless to attain, and which God gives gratuitously to whomsoever He pleases, through sheer kindness.

In this volume we speak—as Saint Teresa says in this extract—of the recollection to which we may all attain, and bring to perfection by generous effort. Moreover, it is the surest means of preparing for the other, in so far as one can prepare for a favour purely gratuitous.

"We must withdraw in spirit far from all external things and come inwardly nearer to God; even in our daily occupations we must retire within ourselves, were it only for a moment . . . in short, we should gradually accustom ourselves to converse quietly with Him.

"I beg the divine Master to deign to teach this method of prayer to those among you who do not know it. As for me, I confess that I never knew what it was to pray in a satisfactory manner until He Himself taught me this.

"Does anyone wish to acquire this habit of recollection? for it is one which depends on yourself. Then let him not waste his powers in useless activities, but let him mind himself and use himself for his own welfare by turning the senses themselves to a use advantageous to his inner life. If he speaks, let him remember there is One in his heart to whom he may speak; if others speak to him, let him not forget that he should inwardly listen to a Voice still nearer. At length he will know that he may, if he will, live always in this divine intimacy; and if it ever happens that he leaves the presence of this heavenly Father for long . . . he will feel unhappy.

"This exercise should be done, if possible, several times a day; if not, let it be done sometimes at least. The suol will become accustomed to it, and sooner or later will derive great profit from it. When the habit

is acquired, the soul will not exchange it for all the treasures of the world.

"In God's name, as nothing can be attained without trouble, do not grudge the time and attention that you will devote to it; I assure you that, with God's help, you will succeed in a year, and perhaps in six months.[1]

"May God grant that we may never leave the shelter of His presence! Amen."—Saint Teresa: *The Way of Perfection*, chap. xxxi.

[1] Saint Teresa is evidently speaking to souls already accustomed to the usual exercises of a devout life.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOYS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Adhærere Deo, bonum est.

("It is good for me to adhere to my God.")

Ps. xxii. 27

To the soul united to God is promised "joy and peace in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17).

This joy "passeth all understanding" (Phil. iv. 7).

This means:

That it does not belong to the domain of sense.

That its sweetness surpasses immeasurably that of earthly joys.

Even in suffering we can feel this joy, for it soars above all human woes.

In order to give a final perfection to souls, God allows this joy of possessing Him to be accompanied by the torturing thought that they do not possess Him sufficiently.

And this torture, in spite of the sorrow it brings, proves to be, without losing its sting, the sweetest of joys, transcended by none but that of complete possession in heaven itself.

CHAPTER VI

THE JOYS OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Joys full of brightness and adoration are God's inseparable companions. When He comes in to us some of them fly from heaven in His train, singing His glory.

If you behold a true joy, God is there—and, where God is, you will surely find true joy.

The happiness of souls in a state of grace, conscious of the treasure they possess, has three sources:

They possess God.

No one but themselves can take Him from them.

God's one desire is to give Himself to them more and more with every minute.

Sto ad ostium et pulso[1] ("Behold I stand at the gate and knock. If any man shall hear My voice and open to Me the door, I will come in to him and sup with him").

Let us keep in mind the disciples going to Emmaus in company with the Master, and the meal to which they invite Him, and that

[1] Apoc. iii. 20.

to which He invites them,[1] and then the words of the two travellers, "Were not our hearts burning within us whilst He spoke on the way?"

In the "*Imitation*" we read, *sicut dilectus ad dilectum loqui*, "as the beloved speaks to the beloved. . . ."[2] And one of these is Love itself.

Who can gauge the depths of the love of One who is love's fulfilment for a soul who desires to love Him unreservedly?

"My delights were to be with the children of men," God has said.[3]

Can I say truthfully: "My delights are to be with the everyday Guest of the children of men. I really find pleasure in it. It makes me happy to be with Him"?

If I can say this with truth, I have the key to the divine intimacy.

Da mihi bibere ("I thirst, give Me to drink"). *Da mihi hanc aquam* ("Give me this water that I may not thirst"[4]).

From the meeting of these two thirsts—the Master's thirst for our souls, the soul's thirst for the Master—proceeds holiness.

Happy the souls that yearn.

[1] "I will sup with him, and he with Me," Apoc. iii. 20.

[2] *Imitation*, Book IV, chap. xiii.

[3] Prov. vii. 31.

[4] John iv. 7 and 15.

We cannot think without regret of all the happiness now lost to the world which would exist if all baptized Christians lived in a state of grace, and if all in a state of grace practised "interior" recollection.

The knowledge that God is within us does not, and need not, generally mean that we feel we possess Him. *Possession* is not synonymous with enjoyment—nor is *real* presence synonymous with *felt* presence.

If God is pleased to give us both the *fact* and the *feeling* of His presence within us, it is a purely gratuitous favour, which it would be wrong to expect, and which is no standard of our spiritual worth.

This special gift of God is generally transient and granted designedly; it should be wisely used, and we should be prepared for its withdrawal at any moment. Outside such manifestation, God is always *absconditus*—awaiting us in the great beyond—before revealing Himself fully.

He is like a friend in presence of his friend in a dark closed room—present, it is true, but *hidden*.

Hidden indeed, but *present*, with a presence quite real, though it be of pure faith. It does not come within the range of experience, but should not escape our endeavour and our ever-growing desire for its fuller understanding.

But how can we know "if we are worthy of love"?

The words of Ecclesiastes[1] disturb us because we misunderstand them.

Is it possible to know if I am *actually* free from mortal sin? Why not?

Later on, shall I not commit a serious sin? I cannot state such a thing with certainty; but I can and should expect that God's goodness will prevent such a misfortune if I am watchful and faithful.

We need a cautious prudence, but, above all, a generous confidence.

When we call on God for help, *in adjutorium meum intende*, He has not to come from very far, nor to prepare at length for the mobilization of His forces, nor to sail across oceans. He is quite ready—quite near.

Not alone is He near, but in *vital communication* with us. Only we cannot *see* Him. Something must be kept in reserve.

Even in heaven the "light of glory" will not be an intermediary, but a direct realization of our possession of God. *Facie ad faciem*, says St. Paul.

God present in us, abiding within us, living within us. . . . Let us invest these phrases

[1] ix. 1: *Nescit homo utrum amore an odio dignus sit.* This is the *Vulgate* translation. The Hebrew text runs: "Man knoweth not either love or hate."

with their full wealth of meaning. What words can explain the mystery of the constant companionship of the Three Persons *in the centre of our souls*, and their wish to share it with us?

Within me. . . .

At this very moment, God the Father begets His Son. The Father and the Son together send forth the Holy Ghost.

This invisible and mysterious travail of the Holy Trinity, which constitutes its peculiar being, takes place *in me* now, invisibly but in very truth.

Within me. . . .

I close my eyes. At this very moment, far down in the depths of my soul, in a dark basement strangely lighted up at times, my inmost being gushes forth in a continuous stream. It gets lost in the myriad labyrinths which lead to other beings. And *right down there*, beside my meagre thread of life, the great fountain of eternal Life silently bubbles forth.

Let my faith be ever watchful, listening for the springing waters of eternal Life *deep down within me. . . .*

Try with the eyes of faith to discover and follow the many side-streams, perceptible or concealed, which diverge from the infinite fountain to enrich the poor rill.

Let me admire above all how God unites

me in a wonderful *consortium* with the inmost secret of His being.

I participate through grace in the divine generation of the Word by the Father which takes place in me. I am involved by means of grace in the continuous sending of the Holy Ghost which takes place within me.

Consors divinæ naturæ—words which suggest and affirm this fact.

The act by which I know God—faith on earth and vision in heaven—and the act by which God knows Himself, are two analogous acts. St. Paul and St. John affirm this.[1] Now, in God, this has a name: the generation of the Word.

It is the same with love. There are two similar acts—that of God being called the sending of the Holy Ghost.

This is a wonderful exaltation of a human act entering thus "sidelong" (to use an expression which needs instant correction, yet which we almost have a right to use) into the current of a real circumincession.[2]

[1] "I shall know even as I am known"—*sicut et cognitus sum* (1 Cor. xiii 12). "We shall be like to Him: because we shall see Him as He is"—*Similes ei erimus . . . videbimus eum sicuti est* (1 John iii. 2).

[2] *Circumincession:* Each divine person is present wherever one of the other two is present (see Chap. II.). Thus we can see the sense, *unsuitable* and *very real*, at the same time in which our daring use of this word is warranted by the texts quoted and also by the words of our Saviour: "You and I are one; and My Father and I are one. You and I and the Father are all one."

God is *within me.* Rather than try to make Him live my life, I should live His.

We should beware of confining God within our own limits; we might as well try to imprison the ocean in a shell, or infinity in our own littleness. Let us remember the words of Saint Augustine: *Habitat in te Deus, sed ut te contineat* ("God abides in you, that you may abide in Him").

Father Faber tells us, with the intimacy which the English word "home" implies, so to act as to be truly *at home* in the mystery of the Holy Trinity which is our eternal *home.*[1]

That is exactly what the Master Himself asked of Saint Teresa: "Seek Me in yourself. But do still more"—and by this He meant not to exclude His first request, but to specify and enlarge it—"seek yourself in Me."

Read the following verses composed by the great Carmelite nun about the above event:[2]

"Seek thyself only in Me."
(Verse 2.)

". . . Not in the wide world,
But in thyself, must I be sought."
(Verse 3.)

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[1] *Posthumous Works*, vol. i, p. 114 (Lethielleux, 1906).
[2] *Life According to the Bollandists*, vol. ii, p. 485 (second edition, Retaux).

" . . . Seek Me always within thy heart."
(Verse 5.[1])

Note the expressive comparison—to be well understood, but very true—a vessel full of water plunged into the ocean. It is both container and contained.

While digging the foundation on which to build the chapel of the convent " Des Oiseaux " in Paris, a brass heart-shaped medal was found, bearing on one side the figure of the Heart of Jesus, with the words : " *God in me*," and on the other a figure of the Heart of Mary, with the words : " *I in God.*"

Let us inscribe this living motto in living letters upon our own hearts : *Vos in me, et ego in vobis*[2] (" a mutual indwelling ").

Father Natal in his well-known book on Perfection, in recommending, like all the masters, the practice of ejaculatory prayer so

[1] These are the words of a Carmelite, a worthy daughter of Saint Teresa : " O Life divine! Life divine! flow through my soul and guide my actions. Thy heart, O my God, is my true abode. Thy being envelops all breathing things, like a river in flood ; and I am like the little grain of sand on the shore, awaiting the wave which will bear it to the ocean. Yes, I desire to leave there all that I have, and cast my whole soul into that boundless sea ! My God . . . grant that I may rise to Thee, and grow in Thee, until at last I am one with Thee " (*Sister Marie-Aimée of Jesus, of the Carmelite Convent of the Avenue de Saxe, Paris-Natoye, Prov. de Namur*, vol. i, p. 482).

[2] John xiv. 20.

as to draw nearer to union with God, suggests the following as the most important theme: "God is in me; I am in God. He dwells within me; I am a mere atom of nothingness made divine in the ocean of His infinity."[1]

Here is an inclusive sketch and summary of all possible intimacy with God: "Live in His heart Who lives in thine."

If you cast into your heart mere nothings, mere trifles, by thousands and thousands . . . do you think you will fill your heart?

Since your supernatural destiny is to receive the infinite there, so long as the infinite does not fill it, it is empty.

Why are the majority of men not happy? "Because they fear that self-renúnciation would make them unhappy," says Father Lallemant,[2] "they remain always miserable."

"How great," says Saint Teresa, "is the folly of the beggar who, being offered royal robes, fears the slight cold he will have to bear on removing his rags, and so refuses them!"

Though trials are not shut out, the joy of God's friendship renders all the selfish

[1] "*Deus in me et ego in Deo: in me manet et ego in eo, tanquam in centro amabili et in pelago immenso perfectionum infinitarum*" (*De Cœlesti Perfectione*, Part I, chap. xiv, § 4).

[2] The author of the *Spiritual Doctrine*.

pleasures insipid. "He who has once inwardly tasted Thy sweetness, O my God, is compelled to live in bitterness as long as he enjoys Thee not."[1]

Those who have drunk at fountains find the water of cisterns insipid.

One may suffer and at the same time possess perfect joy. They are different domains. Is it necessary to remind you of the dialogue between Francis of Assisi and Brother Leo, and of the words of the Apostle St. Paul: "I overflow with joy in affliction!"?

"Come to Me all you who thirst!"

How sweet and yet how awful is this imploring call of God. He burns with the desire to establish His *Kingdom*. And His Kingdom —what an ambitious word!—consists in being loved by me, worthless me!

On hearing the words of God, "I want to give you Myself," M. Olier, in great fear, protests, "My God, I cannot bear Thee."

"You are My tabernacle. I wish to live within you," the Master said to a privileged soul. Her answer was, "If I wert Thou, I would not choose me!"[2]

But it is just us that He *has* chosen!

[1] Saint Francis of Sales' *Love of God*, I, VI, chap. xv.

[2] *Spiritual Journal of Lucie-Christine* (*Beauchesne*), p. 78.

"Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in earth or heaven, for love is born of God, and cannot rest but in God, above all things created."[1]

And at the same time nothing is more painful. "When man contemplates with burning eyes of love the greatness, the faithfulness, of God within himself; when he thinks of His nature, His love, His proofs of love, His kindness; and when, contemplating himself, he counts up his offences against this great, trusting Lord, he turns upon his own inner self with anger and disgust so great that it seems impossible to him to atone for his crime."[2]

There are two inexpressible tortures in the spiritual life—

To feel that Love is too distant.
To feel that Love is too near.

If too distant, then it is an unquenchable thirst, *Sicut desiderat cervus* . . . the thirst of which the canticle speaks . . . *Veni Domine Jesu*. To Magdalen's question at the tomb: "Tell me where He is," comes the terrible answer: "Touch Me not; the hour is not yet come."

It results in an overpowering desire to see God: the words of Saint Teresa: "I am

[1] *Imitation*, I, III, chap. v, par. 3.
[2] Ruysbroeck.

dying because I cannot die"; the verses of the *Spiritual Canticle*, and the burning words of the *Living Flame of Love*,[1] the *cupio dissolvi* of the Apostle near despair, exulting, faltering, and powerless with too much love.

If *too near*. . . . Then it is worse, there is such a great abyss of difference. *Tu mihi!* . . . *Unde veniat?* Comest Thou to me! Whence does this abnormal and overwhelming favour come to me?

"Would I could hide and flee from the light and the graces with which Jesus floods me, and with which He longs to overwhelm me. . . . I suffer, not with love for Him, but because I love Him not; because my love is not great enough for Love itself."[2]

If God sends us hunger He wounds us; if He gives abundance He wounds us still more. All the saints declare this.

And the mystery is intensified by the fact that, compared with the happiness of these two wounds, all other joys are nothing.

"*Love Me*," says God. A crowning demand, which also crucifies us.

[1] Saint John of the Cross. Just where that grace, which is not "ordinary grace," begins, in this yearning after God, does not concern us here.

[2] *Caroline Clement*, by Father Henry, S.S.R.: *Sister Marie-Aimée de Jésus* (Lib. Saint Paul, Paris, p. 461): "The hunger Thou sendest me, O God, helps me to live, but the abundance I find in Thee makes me die." The same cry comes from all souls who yearn for God.

"Love Me *as I love thee.*" A request rendered a thousand times more cruel by the unequal comparison which divides one's whole being; dragged, on the one hand, by an irresistible longing towards God, and, on the other, held by an infinite powerlessness at a hopeless distance from Him!

God is always far too high for the uplifted hands of desire; without Him we cannot live, yet we cannot attain to Him. Such suffering is like that of a man tied to a rope too short for him to reach the islet on which he would set foot.

He who has been at the wedding remembers the feast. He who has, longs to have more. Alas! "One dish is always wanting."

We possess heaven when we are aware that we possess God: but not the bliss of heaven, since we only possess God imperfectly. "A sad heaven," said a holy soul who had suffered the pangs of this joy.

* * * *

"What is spiritual joy?

"It is not only a feeling, a consolation, a happiness; it is a virtue . . . the true liberty of a soul which seeks God. Not to stand well with God is the opposite of joy.

"Spiritual joy is consistent with all states of the soul, and can exist in all the circumstances of our poor life. It is a feeling of

inward wealth. . . . How can you belong to God and yet be concerned only about yourself, about the events and things of this sad world, and the troubles of daily life? They are painful, I agree, but you have a secret dwelling-place, a sanctuary closed to the world, and occupied by God alone, where you can always say, 'O my God! I belong to You!' Neither afflictions, nor tempests, nor the clamour of the world, can tear you away from this secret abode, from this hidden sanctuary where you can always converse with God, in a mysterious friendship which is the beginning of heaven.

"We must beg for this spiritual joy which helps the soul onward to pure love, and places it between heaven and earth."—Father de Ravignan.

CHAPTER VII

THE SPLENDOUR OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Qui manet in me et ego in eo, hic fert fructum multum.

("He . . . in whom I abide, beareth much fruit.")

JOHN XV. 5.

"Sine me, nihil" (*Without Me, there is nothing*).

Without being united to God, there can be no fruitful apostleship.

"*Whence comes it that many so-called well-organized enterprises effect so little?*" *asked the Foundress of the "Friends of the Poor," Teresa Durnevin.* "*Because the principal thing in the organization is lacking. There are arms, feet, head, several tongues—but no heart. The heart is the inner life of an enterprise.*"

CHAPTER VII

THE SPLENDOUR OF INTIMACY WITH GOD

Moses was in the heart of the desert — *ad interiora deserti*—when God came and sought him, to make him the deliverer of Israel.

The first "enterprise" to undertake is "going *inwards*." Streams come only from springs.

That the soul withdraws within itself does not necessarily, nor frequently, mean that it avoids its duties towards its neighbours, but merely that it wishes to reconcile these duties with recollection. Going "inwards" is not running away, nor desertion, but making oneself better qualified for outward action.

Many speak in the desert because they come not from the desert.

They leave it to scatter seed—*exiit seminare* —but they have no seed with them. To sow seed "outside" we must have gathered it "within"—*seminare semen.*

Words will do no good unless they are the result of silent prayer.

For effective action, meditate deeply. This is the only way to bring the Eternal into all our acts, which is a necessary condition for omnipotence.

Contemplata aliis tradere is a maxim of the Dominicans. It should be a maxim for all preachers, all missioners, all apostles—to give to others *contemplata*, things seen in contemplation. In the domain of the Invisible we only see if we "contemplate." He who prays well will preach well.

Seeing the first companions of Ignatius Loyola so united to God, his contemporaries called them *clerici contemplatores*—"contemplative priests, priests always in meditation." And yet God knows how far these men of prayer were zealous sowers of seed.

"When several souls in full possession of the interior life unite in an apostolic aim, and when the Holy Ghost inspires them with unanimous desires, they are irresistible." [1]

"Who has given you this grand and powerful voice?" "The sea, whence I come."

[1] Dom Chautard, *The Soul of All Apostleship*. He then goes on: "It is a great misfortune to find, among a large number of souls directing important work, few or none having this inward life. In such a case God's power is, so to speak, fettered, the supernatural is dimmed and overshadowed; the country falls away, and Providence seems to hand over all things from the good to the wicked."

Ah, how grand, powerful, and how divine a voice he would have, if he tried not to surpass in power the oceans of this world but to sojourn often by the boundless ocean and live there, beside the great strand of eternity where the world ends and God begins!

How powerful would be the Master's kingdom on earth if we always acted like "gods" —*dii estis*—if we "lived" as *He* would.

What strength we derive from having within us Him who is all-powerful! Provided we have faith in His power and His presence within us.

Do nothing in which He cannot join.

To speak with authority to souls the apostle must come down from Sinai, the Bible in his hand, in his heart the glow of his converse with God.

Everything is against me. I am alone. If you walk *per ipsum, cum ipso, in ipso* ("through Him, with Him, and in Him"), go straight ahead.

Alone with God! What a mighty majority!

In God, all *external* transactions—that is, those which have reference to the development and government of the universe, cause no change in His interior life.

So let no external action of ours be a detriment to our inward life.

Let us not belong so much to others as not to belong still more to ourselves—*i.e.*, to God. *Tuus esto ubique*, Saint Bernard advised Pope Eugenius: "always belong to yourself."

"To write in presence of the Holy Trinity makes one's hand shake," said E. Psichari. Fearful, indeed, but also a joy, and a necessary condition of all fruitful apostleship.

"The heart of the true servant of God is a tabernacle where an unseen God constantly dwells. It is in this constant presence of God in the heart of the saints that the true secret of the supernatural power of holiness lies; for it is not the child of Adam, a fragile weakling, who brings about in the souls of others the resurrection to the life of grace—it is the Holy Ghost operating in Him."[1]

We who, perhaps, counted so much on natural talent and personal effort can be transformed only by *union with God*.

Even without the prospect of God's glory, a saintly life would be worth living, since it gives great value to our words.

We carry God within us. He lives *within* us. This we know and even meditate upon.

[1] Saint Catherine of Siena.

. . . And does His presence not show any sign? And can many souls who are outside God approach Him within us with impunity? They can be familiar with us and gain nothing from us! God's strength abides *within* us. And yet no strength, no virtue, emanates from us? Nothing? No resistless power of conversion? Nothing which cries aloud to souls, "God! God!"?

What unworthy possessors of God are we!

"Alas! Alas! I can hardly think of a single moment of strength. Cold and mechanical preparation of a lecture none the less solemn—full of pretty things and wise things—but with no arrows, no axe, no nectar, no bellowings, no home thrusts, no love, nothing which delights.

"And why?"[1]

The above examination of conscience is by a pulpit orator . . . but a Protestant.

Entrusted with the task of administering the Word, shall we leave the world such as we found it? When we are gone shall there be in the world no more faith, no more resignation, no more hope, no more love, than we found in it?

And if so, why?

Our mission is difficult because while others say "Come and see," we say "Come,

[1] Emerson.

not to see"—or, rather, "Come and see what is unseen."

If we are not inhabitants of this "unseen world," we will never impart the irresistible conviction that the unseen world exists.

Being a minister and dispenser of unseen realities, I must be one to whom *appearances* are nothing.

What a sacrifice that demands! The holocaust of all empty realities. We can never give back life to another unless we are willing to die ourselves.

It takes an angel to roll away the tombstone.

The heart of every apostle should be a copy of the Heart of Jesus; visibly flaming, surmounted by a cross and surrounded by a crown of thorns.

The value of our "external" acts should be measured by our "inward" "suffering."

You know the words of Saint Vincent de Paul to his missionaries: "Be rather sufferers than doers."

Souls like to be approached with a respect such as a priest has for the Host, and some desire to be touched only "by hands which have been pierced with nails."

There is a wonderful attraction between one star and another. And around every visible star myriads of invisible ones revolve.

The holier a soul is, the greater its power of attraction.

At the present moment it depends on me to increase divine life in the world. If I forget —or neglect—to sanctify myself now, God will have for all eternity less spiritual treasure to dispense to the thousands of millions of human beings who exist and will exist.

They speak of the powerful ones of the world. We are all such. The treasures of God belong to us, and we can endow souls with them if we so desire.

A single holy thought, a single unselfish resolution, a single spiritual act, however small, is, since it proceeds from God's adopted child, so valuable that no price in this world can reward it; it is connected with an eternal thought of God. Such is its *previous* history.

In the future each of my spiritual acts will reverberate down to the end of time. In heaven there will be souls who owe their salvation to such a sacrifice of another—perhaps an unknown—soul which obtained for them the benefits of the Redemption.

In both directions we arrive at the eternal.

* * * *

"Does there exist anywhere in the world a single thing which of itself can have grace, except grace itself?

"Even if we received all the gifts of nature, all the perfections of the angels, all these would be nothing compared to the acquisition of one degree of grace; for grace is a participation in the divine nature.

"Go and spread this doctrine among your friends; show them the treasures they can store up by the help of grace; show them how one grace attracts another, how it thus becomes a merit, and then how merits lead to eternal glory in heaven. . . . Pray, pray that men may conceive a higher and truer idea of grace, and you will become a secret apostle of Jesus. He possesses all graces; He yearns to distribute them. . . . Go and help Jesus. Why should one of those souls for whom He gave His life perish? But men are not the least concerned about their divinity. St. Paul devoted all his life to preaching grace to men, in begging God to send it to them, and to direct them in its proper use. . . . O beloved King of souls! how can we find it in our hearts to squander away our days in the service of any other but you!"—Father Faber, *All for Jesus*, chap. i, par. 6.

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

A SHORT examination of conscience—and a resolution.

The examination of conscience:

Domus mea, domus orationis vocabitur. Is my house "a house of prayer"?[1]

The resolution:

"Lord, I promise Thee not to be disheartened by the *past*, and not to be uneasy about the *future*—and, in the *present*, to attend only to Thee within me."

Here is a conversation between two saints, Monseigneur de Ségur and the Curé d'Ars. It is a summary and consecration of what these pages contain:

"One day," relates the venerable blind man, "when I was speaking to him (the Abbé Vianney) about the mystery of God living within us, the good saint seized me joyfully by the arm, exclaiming: 'Oh! how good it is! How good it is! *It is everything!*'"

[1] Matt. xxi. 23.

May Mary, "the Mother of divine grace," grant that this modest book may bring to pass the words of her divine Son to Saint Mechtilde:

"All who seek Me faithfully will find in this book great cause for joy; those who love Me will burn with a more ardent love for Me, and those who suffer will there find consolation."

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PLUS, S. J., RAOUL

AUTHOR

Living with God.

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